



Great MN Schools
1330 Lagoon Ave 4th floor
Minneapolis, MN 55408

Entrepreneur Planning Grants (Pre-Operational): Application Process

Great MN Schools (GMS) will provide planning support to the most promising entrepreneurial leaders and boards developing new charter schools to serve students in Minneapolis. Pre-operational schools are potentially eligible to receive a grant of \$50,000 and access to technical assistance programs. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis until October 1st of the year before the school plans to open, but please note that the review process may take up to two months.

Step 1 – Invitation to Apply: Applications may be submitted by invitation only following an introductory meeting between GMS staff and a school's designated representative(s) and in consideration of whether the school meets the following requirements:

- School has been approved by an authorizer.
- 501(c)(3) application to IRS for nonprofit tax-exempt status is pending or approved.
- At least one founding board member has prior experience as a staff person or board member of a charter school.
- Desired founding leader has been identified or hired and has prior experience as a school leader and/or in a leadership residency program.
- Founding team (leadership and board) has significant representation from communities of color, including those communities the school plans to serve.
- At least one member of the founding team has entrepreneurial experience leading start-up projects or organizations.
- At least one member of the founding team has K-12 instructional leadership experience that includes knowledge of the core components of the academic program the school plans to implement.
- Core components of the school model have strong evidence of student academic success and/or were developed through a formal program for innovative school design.
- School has been awarded a grant from the [federal Charter School Program \(CSP\)](#) and from the [New Schools Venture Fund](#) (if applicable) or the school demonstrates strong potential to receive those grants once it is eligible to apply.

Step 2 – Submit Written Application: Invited applicants should submit a proposal (2-5 pages, not including attachments) explaining how the proposed school meets the following criteria and/or referencing those sections and pages of the school's application to its authorizer where they are clearly addressed.

Founding Team

- 1) Do the school's founding leader and/or other members of the founding team have a demonstrated track record of achieving entrepreneurial and student academic success?



- 2) Does the school's founding board have the governance skills and capacity necessary to oversee and support the school's successful start-up?
- 3) What expertise and skill gaps in the founding leader's (or leadership team's) experience have been identified? How will those be addressed during the pre-operational phase?
- 4) How does the composition of the founding team reflect the school's commitment to having a leadership and board that is reflective of the communities it plans to serve?

School Model

- 1) Do the core components of the school's model have strong evidence of student academic success and/or were developed through a formal program for innovative school design?
- 2) Has the school articulated a comprehensive, integrated plan to implement the proposed model that addresses all essential areas for a successful opening (e.g. talent, operations, data-driven progress monitoring, etc.)?
- 3) Would the school have a strategic impact on K-12 education in Minneapolis, such as by offering an innovative model, serving a neighborhood or community with limited access to high-performing schools, and/or diversifying the leadership of the city's schools?

Community Standing

- 1) Does the founding team have strong and authentic ties to the neighborhood or community the school plans to serve?
- 2) Is the school receiving foundational support from other organizations (e.g. school model development, sourcing of board members, providing staff for pre-operational work, student recruitment, pre-operational funding, in-kind contributions, etc.)?

Attachments

- 1) Application to authorizer
- 2) Resume of identified/hired founding leader
- 3) Current board roster & bios (if changed since authorizer application)
- 4) Charter contract performance goals (if finalized)

Step 3 -- Interview: GMS staff will conduct an interview with the leadership of the school's founding team to address any remaining questions about the school's proposal. Schools that receive a recommendation for grant funding by staff will be brought to the GMS Board for final approval.

Schools interested in this grant program should contact Morgan Brown at mbrown@greatmnschools.org or 952-297-6791 with any questions and/or to schedule an introductory meeting.

(Revised April 2021)

